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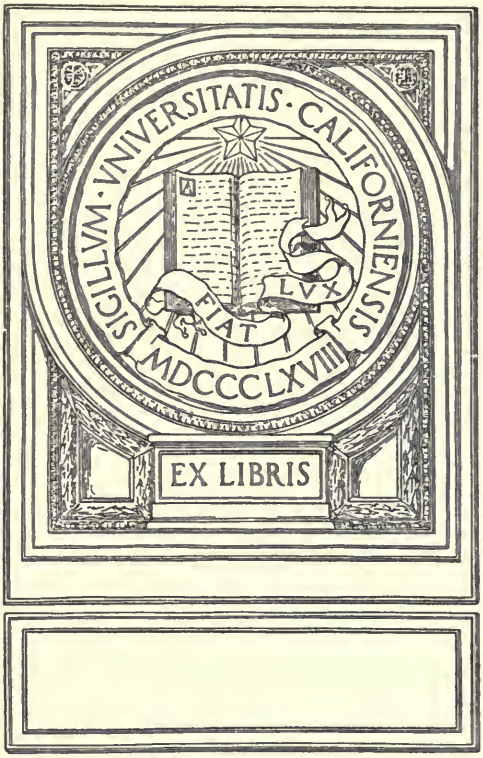
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THE COUNTY BOND ISSUES

TO BE VOTED UPON NOVEMBER 6, 1917

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STATEMENT TO THE VOTERS OF COOK COUNTY

BY THE

CHICAGO BUREAU OF PUBLIC EFFICIENCY

315 PLYMOUTH COURT

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THE COUNTY BOND ISSUES

TO BE VOTED UPON NOVEMBER 6, 1917

To the Voters of Cook County:

At the judicial election of November 6th, propositions to authorize the issuance by Cook County of bonds to the amount of $6,000,000 are to be submitted to the voters of the county for approval or rejection. The purposes for which these bonds are proposed are as follows:

For the construction of roads on specified highways	$1,000,000
For a branch County Hospital at Ninety-fifth and South State Streets	1,000,000
For a pathological and research laboratory and morgue in connection with the County Hospital	1,000,000
For a new County Jail	3,000,000
	$6,000,000

The first proposition—that relating to road construction—represents a carefully considered program. The County is already committed to a policy of highway improvement in co-operation with the State of Illinois. The roads which it is proposed to build with the proceeds of this bond issue are important extensions of the county highway system. A large proportion of the mileage to be built with the proceeds of this proposed bond issue is also included in the larger program of road construction to be undertaken by the State of Illinois, if approved by

the voters in November, 1918. If this larger program shall be approved, the State will reimburse Cook County for such portion of the bond issue as shall be spent upon road construction in accordance with the program of the State.

The Chicago Bureau of Public Efficiency does not hesitate to approve this bond proposition and to urge its adoption by the voters of Cook County.

The three other propositions present a different situation. The general need of improvements along the line indicated in each instance may be conceded. In fact, the need for a new jail has been obvious for some time. Twice before, however, the people have voted down the proposition for a bond issue for a new jail, because the County Board had no well considered plans on the subject. Despite this, the Board has not undertaken the solution of the real problems involved. It asks the people for blind authorization to spend $3,000,000 for a new jail, without first indicating that it understands the jail problem of the community.

It was never intended that the referendum on bond issues should be so used. The proper procedure is to outline the features of a project and present it to the public for discussion, with a statement of the reasons in its favor, before ordering a proposition for the issuance of bonds placed upon the ballot. Citizens and citizen organizations should have the opportunity to be heard and to offer suggestions for modifications of a plan before its final formulation. Moral assurance at least should then be given that the plan will be adhered to in its main features in case of approval by the people of the proposition to issue bonds for the purpose.

The Chicago Bureau of Public Efficiency is in full accord with the spokesmen for other civic organizations who ask that the County Board appoint, long in advance of another popular vote on the requisite bond issue, an expert commission, so that the conclusions of the experts on essential features may be presented to the people at the time they are asked to authorize the bond issue.

The same reasoning applies to the proposition for a branch County Hospital and for a new laboratory and morgue in connection with the County Hospital.

The people should be furnished more definite and authoritative plans and reasons for these projects before approving bond issues for them. Popular authorization of bond issues for these projects may well await their more careful presentation to the voters.

On general principles, it is not well to undertake public improvements in these times, except those that are imperatively needed. In this connection the following statement made recently by Secretary of War Baker should be borne in mind:

> "The resources of the country in a general way may be said to consist of men, money, and material, and during the period of war any new enterprise or undertaking should be tried and justified by the test: Will the men, money, and material so applied best contribute in this way to the winning of the war? New enterprises which are not fundamental to the efficient operation of the country's necessary activities should not be undertaken."

Tax levies for county purposes are limited by the Constitution of the State to seventy-five cents upon each one hundred dollars of the assessed value of the taxable property within the county, unless the levying of an additional tax is authorized by an affirmative vote of the male voters

of the county. Women may vote upon a proposition for the issuance of bonds, but not upon the question of levying an additional tax with which to pay the principal of the bonds and the interest thereon. With each of the foregoing propositions for the issuance of bonds the County Board has combined a proposition to authorize the levying of an additional tax with which to meet the payments of both principal and interest. The Bureau believes that there is no justification under present conditions for placing the tax levies for either principal or interest outside the seventy-five cent limit. The Bureau believes, also, that the fact that a proposition to levy additional taxes is to be submitted with each of the foregoing bond propositions is an additional reason for defeating the three propositions last mentioned, although not a sufficiently serious objection to the proposition for the road bonds to justify voting against it.

The Bureau recommends a vote for the road bond proposition, and defeat of the three other bond propositions.

Chicago Bureau of Public Efficiency,
Harris S. Keeler,
Director.

October 30, 1917.

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